

The Abstracts of the 6th Annual Conference of the APS Psychology of Relationships Interest Group

Relationships Near and Far

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Abstracts Editor: Barry J. Fallon
Australian Catholic University

The National Committee and the Conference Organising Committee of the APS Psychology of Relationships Interest Group, welcomes you to our 6th Annual Conference. The Annual Conference is one of the main activities of the Interest Group - expert Keynote speakers, challenging and interesting presentations of research and practice, and enjoyable socialising with colleagues. We, in the Interest Group are a "broad church" - we do not constrain what the referent is for "relationships". The Conference is an excellent opportunity to meet with colleagues who share similar interests and provides an ideal venue for students accompanied by their supervisor, to present their work in a climate that, while not threatening, can be quite challenging. Our aim for this year's conference was to provide a forum for current research, case studies, and theoretical papers but with an emphasis on Relationships Near and Far. The distance may be geographical or psychological. We are involved in a multiplicity of relationships. Many of our relationships are extremely positive and bring us our greatest joys; some are not as successful and bring us our tears and our sorrows. The media continually puts before us the interactions and outcomes of relationships between various individuals but especially the outcomes of relationships gone wrong between groups in our society as well as between nations; hence our Conference theme for this year. We have been successful in selecting, through a refereed process, a diversity of papers for presentation. The presentations include international authors - Poland, the UK, Canada and the USA, in addition to the usual coverage from throughout Australia. This year we are honoured to have Julie Fitness from Macquarie University, and Garth Fletcher from Canterbury University in Christchurch, NZ present Keynote addresses. Finally, let me thank you the participants for your attendance at our 6th Annual Conference. It is your participation and attendance that enables the Interest Group to meet some of the needs of its members as well as provide an excellent opportunity for those with an interest in the development of our own research, practice, and personal relationships.

CONFERENCE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

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NATIONAL COMMITTEE

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~~proneness, shame proneness, and attachment style. The importance of humiliation and powerlessness as important elicitors of hate, and of dispositional shame proneness as an impediment both to “forgiving and forgetting” a partner’s offence, will be discussed. Finally, I will explore the implications of this research program for enriching our theoretical understanding of the role of emotions in relationship breakdown and repair, and for enhancing the potential effectiveness of relationship counselling and therapy.~~

The intimate relationship mind

~~FLETCHER, G. (University of Canterbury, NZ)
garth.fletcher@canterbury.ac.nz~~

~~This talk describes a programme of research, and associated theory, dealing with the structure and functions of standards and expectations in the context of intimate sexual relationships. Several themes are addressed including: (a) how does this work contribute to a general theory of the relationship mind (and does such a thing exist?); (b) the connections between social psychology and evolutionary psychology (should they be married or divorced?); (c) the issue of domain specificity in relationship cognition (just how mushy is relationship cognition?); and (d) sex differences in expectations (how easily can culture wipe them out?).~~

Adoptees’ relationship experiences post-reunion: Exploring the effects of interactions with biological relatives

~~FOULSTONE, AR., FEENEY, JA. (University of Queensland), & PASSMORE, NL. (University of Southern Queensland)
a.foulstone@uq.edu.au~~

~~Recent changes in adoption legislation and practice have provided adoptees with greater opportunities to search and be reunited with birth relatives. A thorough understanding of the relationship experiences an adoptee may encounter post-reunion is critical for counsellors seeking to provide support for adoptees during these search and reunion experiences. This paper examines the relationship benefits and difficulties associated with the broadening social network after a reunion. As part of a larger study, 57 adoptees were interviewed about their adoptive experiences and interpersonal relationships. Thematic analysis revealed several major themes associated with adoptees’ reunions: (a) potential issues in adapting to a new family, (b) difficulties experienced when attempting to negotiate family roles and set boundaries between family members, (c) positive and negative interactions between adoptive and biological families, and (d) benefits and difficulties that can affect significant others (e.g., romantic partners, children). Open communication, compatible personalities, and supportive adoptive parents were factors promoting a beneficial environment for adoptive and biological~~

~~families post-reunion. Conversely, strong loyalties to the adoptive family, secrecy or withholding information about the reunion, and different needs or expectations of family members created difficulties within the broader social network. Recommendations for adoption practice and counselling will be discussed.~~

Domestic violence in same-sex relationships

~~FRANKLAND, A. (Macquarie University)
andrew.frankland@students.mq.edu.au~~

~~Domestic violence represents a major issue currently facing the GLBTI community, affecting one in three same-sex relationships. Despite a broad range of community and health support services, there remains a need for sustained empirical research on same-sex domestic violence (SSDV). This paper presents preliminary results from an ongoing study of SSDV in an Australian context. This study gathered quantitative data from a web-based survey that obtained information about individual respondents, their relationship history and their experiences of SSDV in both current and previous relationships. Respondents also completed a number of standardised inventories – the revised Conflict Tactics Scale, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Internalised Shame Scale. Results from this survey were analysed to determine the prevalence and patterns of abusive experiences within the sample. Preliminary results are consistent with existing data on the prevalence of SSDV, the complexity of power dynamics in same-sex relationships, and the need for the ongoing development of community-based support policies and services for victims. Implications for theoretical and methodological approaches to domestic violence are discussed.~~

Female sexual dysfunction: A theoretical consideration of sexual response and aetiological factors

~~GILES, K., & McCABE, M. (Deakin University)
kgil@deakin.edu.au~~

~~The literature has consistently criticised traditional sexual response models for presenting a linear model of sexual behaviour that fails to account for the interactive influences among women’s sexual response phases. This paper will present a theoretical consideration of a recently revised model of the female sex response cycle, comprising overlapping phases of variable order. The complex motivational factors and distinct experience of subjective and physiological sexual arousal proposed in this revised model will also be discussed. The extent to which psychological factors comprising historical, individual and relationship characteristics may be associated with female sexual dysfunction, will also be evaluated.~~